

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1- 86. (Canceled)

87. (Currently Amended) A backlight apparatus, comprising:

a long tubular fluorescent tube; and

a pair of inverter transformers for converting input voltages into high voltages and supplying high voltages having opposite phases to the ends of the fluorescent tube,

wherein ~~each one inverter transformer~~ of the pair of inverter transformers is positioned ~~near the ends in~~ close proximity to one end of the fluorescent tube and the other inverter transformer of the pair of inverter transformers is positioned in close proximity to the other end of the fluorescent tube, the length of a connection between the one inverter transformer and the one end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the one inverter transformer and the other end of the fluorescent tube, and the length of a connection between the other inverter transformer and the other end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the other inverter transformer and the one end of the fluorescent tube for supplying the high voltages to the fluorescent tube.

88. (Currently Amended) A backlight apparatus, comprising:

a long tubular fluorescent tube;

a pair of inverter transformers for converting input voltages into high voltages and supplying high voltages having opposite phases to the ends of the fluorescent tube,

wherein one inverter transformer of the pair of inverter transformers is positioned ~~near in~~ close proximity to one end of the fluorescent tube, and the other inverter transformer of the pair of inverter transformers is disposed ~~near in~~ close proximity to the other end of the fluorescent tube, the length of a connection between the one inverter transformer and the one end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the one inverter transformer and the other end of the fluorescent tube, and the length of a connection between the other inverter transformer and the other end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the other inverter transformer and the one end of the fluorescent tube.

89. (Previously Presented) The backlight apparatus according to claim 87 or 88, wherein each of the pair of inverter transformers is provided in each of a pair of inverter circuits.

90. (Currently Amended) The backlight apparatus according to claim 89, comprising:
a plurality of the fluorescent tubes; and
a plurality of the pair of inverter circuits,
wherein the plurality of the fluorescent tubes are disposed in parallel to one another so that the longitudinal directions thereof are substantially oriented to the same direction, and
wherein at least a one pair of inverter circuits, ~~which~~ are positioned on the same-end side of the plurality of the fluorescent tubes disposed in parallel such that the inverter circuits are adjacent to each other in the direction in which the plurality of the fluorescent tubes are disposed, the inverter circuits being connected in a synchronized manner.

91. (Previously Presented) The backlight apparatus according to claim 87 or 88, comprising a plurality of the fluorescent tubes,
wherein the plurality of the fluorescent tubes are disposed in parallel to one another so that the longitudinal directions thereof are substantially oriented to the same direction, the apparatus further comprising a plurality of the pair of inverter transformers for supplying high voltages having opposite phases to the ends of each of the plurality of the fluorescent tubes.

92. (Previously Presented) The backlight apparatus according to claim 87 or 88, comprising a plurality of the fluorescent tubes,
wherein the plurality of the fluorescent tubes are disposed in parallel to one another so that the longitudinal directions thereof are substantially the same,
wherein the pair of inverter transformers each have a plurality of secondary windings for outputting high voltages, and
wherein voltages from the plurality of secondary windings of one of the pair of inverter transformers are supplied to the same ends of adjacent fluorescent tubes of the plurality of the fluorescent tubes.

93. (Previously Presented) A liquid crystal display device comprising the backlight apparatus according to claim 87 or 88 and a liquid crystal panel.

94. (Currently Amended) An inverter circuit used in a pair for driving a long fluorescent tube provided in a backlight apparatus,

wherein, when a pair of the inverter circuits are used for driving the fluorescent tube, one inverter circuit of the pair of inverter circuits is positioned near-in close proximity to one end of the fluorescent tube and the other inverter circuit of the pair of inverter circuits is disposed near in close proximity to the other end of the fluorescent tube, the length of a connection between the one inverter circuit and the one end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the one inverter circuit and the other end of the fluorescent tube, and the length of a connection between the other inverter circuit and the other end of the fluorescent tube being substantially shorter than the distance between the other inverter circuit and the one end of the fluorescent tube.

95. (Previously Presented) A fluorescent-tube lighting apparatus that is provided in a backlight apparatus comprising a long fluorescent tube, the apparatus comprising a pair of the inverter circuits of claim 94 for driving the fluorescent tube.

96. (Previously presented) A backlight apparatus comprising a long fluorescent tube and the pair of inverter circuits according to claim 94.

97. (Previously presented) A liquid crystal display device comprising the backlight apparatus according to claim 96 and a liquid crystal panel.

98. (Currently Amended) A fluorescent-tube driving apparatus for driving a plurality of fluorescent tubes that are disposed in parallel to one another so that the longitudinal directions thereof are substantially oriented to the same direction, the apparatus comprising:

a first plurality of inverter circuits for supplying high voltages to the ends at one side of the fluorescent tubes, which are positioned near-in close proximity to such ends at one side of the fluorescent tubes, the length of respective connections between the first plurality of inverter

circuits and the ends at the one side of the fluorescent tubes being substantially shorter than the distance between the first plurality of inverter circuits and the ends at the other side of the corresponding fluorescent tubes; and

a second plurality of inverter circuits for supplying high voltages to the ends at the other side of the fluorescent tubes, which are positioned near-in close proximity to such ends at the other side of the fluorescent tubes, the length of respective connections between the second plurality of inverter circuits and the ends at the other side of the fluorescent tubes being substantially shorter than the distance between the second plurality of inverter circuits and the ends at the one side of the corresponding fluorescent tubes.

99. (Previously presented) A backlight apparatus comprising a plurality of fluorescent tubes that are disposed in parallel to one another so that the longitudinal directions thereof are substantially oriented to the same direction and the fluorescent-tube driving apparatus according to claim 98.

100. (Previously presented) A liquid crystal display device comprising the backlight apparatus according to claim 99 and a liquid crystal panel.